DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 227 439 CS 006 970

AUTHOR Brittain, Mary M.
TITLE Developmental and Remedial Reading Instruction for College Students.
PUB DATE Jul 82
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the World Congress on Reading (9th, Dublin, Ireland, July 26-30, 1982).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Content Area Reading; Educational Change; Educational History; Higher Education; *Program Content; Program Descriptions; *Reading Programs; Reading Skills; *Remedial Programs; *Remedial Reading; *School Surveys; Study Skills

ABSTRACT

College reading programs have not only increased in number, but their nature and scope have also changed. There has been a change toward programs that are concerned with improvement of reading in the content areas, and, broadly, with the improvement of learning in college. But at the same time, there appears to be a great variety in college remedial programs. Despite the variability in titles for similar courses and despite the similar emphases across courses, substantive differences in college reading instruction are evident. Some programs give credit and some do not; some are required courses and some are not; and most, but not all, combine reading and study skills. Despite this variability, college reading instruction tends to fall into one of two general categories: the self-contained course or sequence of courses in reading and study skills, and courses or programs in which instruction in reading and study skills is interwoven with supplementary instruction in a content area. Responses to a questionnaire mailed to 50 institutions revealed 16 interesting aspects of college reading programs, among them that: (1) open admissions is still the prevailing condition; (2) programs are more likely not to be interdisciplinary in nature; (3) two topics are covered in all the reading programs--vocabulary development and comprehension; (4) the number of students participating in the programs varies widely; and (5) program changes anticipated over the next few years include expansion, improving techniques of instruction and evaluation, reorganization, elimination of some services due to inadequate funding, and innovative scheduling. (HOD)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED227439

# Developmental and Remedial Reading Instruction for College Students

Mary M. Brittain

Virginia Commonwealth University

Paper presented to the Ninth World Congress on Reading

Dublin, Ireland

July 26-30, 1982

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary M. Brittain

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS006970

"If one skill is needed in college, it is reading. Students know how to avoid mathematics, and they can reduce writing to the barest necessity; but reading is something they cannot avoid." (Waters, 1980, p. 91) This statement, which prefaces a description of reading instruction in the basic skills programs of the City University of New York (CUNY), would probably meet with little disagreement. Reading improvement programs have long been a part of the American college scene, if a modest part. In a survey of state universities conducted in 1929, Parr found that nine schools attempted to identify their poor readers and seven had plans for assisting them. Traxler, in 1938, surveyed 656 liberal arts colleges, of which seventy-six reported having remedial reading programs. Triggs' 1942 survey of 1,528 college presidents/deans found that 185 institutions had remedial reading programs.

Historically, however, it was assumed that most students entering American institutions of higher education were sufficiently proficient in reading to be able to meet the demands of college. The admission/selection process did much to assure that college students could read well enough for academic success. Those who could not were generally weeded out through attrition. After World War II this situation, which had prevailed historically, began to change. Government benefits extended to returning veterans brought into American colleges many students that otherwise would not have pursued higher

education. The change accelerated markedly in the 1960's. This was a period of rapid expansion of community colleges, two-year post-secondary institutions, which have open door admission policies. Also, most universities and four-year colleges liberalized their admission criteria, many adopting, in effect, open admission policies. The number of enrollments from open admissions are reported to have increased from about 700,000 in 1965 to over 3,000,000 in 1972. (New York Times, November 10, 1974)

For many of these students there was strong likelihood that the "open door" would become a "revolving door" (Rouche and Snow, 1977), with college exit following close on the heels of college entrance. Remedial programs offered by colleges proliferated, not only in reading, but in other areas as well. In a 1975 survey of a representative national sample of 100 four-year colleges and universities, Schantz found that seventy-two of the eighty-eight institutions responding, or eighty percent, had remedial reading programs. Of a sample of fifty community colleges in the survey, forty-five responded and all but one had a remedial reading program. Other surveys have shown similar trends. (Wassman, Call, Crawford, Joplin, Mason et al) The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that from the fall of 1979 to the fall of 1980 the total number of courses offered by 370 colleges and universities increased by fifteen percent, but the total number of remedial courses increased by twenty-two percent. It may be of interest to note that corrective and remedial courses in reading per se increased less than did other remedial courses.

Reading programs not only increased in number but the nature and scope of college reading instruction also changed. Manzo (1979) has described the college reading movement in terms of four types of programs which emerged in different periods historically. These are:

1. Rapid reading classes with ancillary attention to study skills. This is the oldest and most traditional of college reading programs.

2. Remedial reading and study skills. These programs largely emerged after World War II in response to the large number of veterans entering college with reading and writing deficits. The programs generally were short-term efforts to boost reading and writing skills.

3. Compensatory programs. These programs emerged in the 1960's in response to the increasing momentum of the civil rights movement and the so-called "war on poverty."

4. Content area improvement or learning programs. This label is used to characterize the present period in college reading which is described more as a general improvement of learning approach than simply the improvement of reading.

As Manzo's typology suggests, the change has been toward programs that are concerned with improvement of reading in the content areas and, broadly, with the improvement of learning in college. But at the same time, there appears to be great variety in college remedial programs. To some extent, this variation may be a matter of nomenclature. Wassman (1977), for example, in a study of reading programs in ninety-seven California colleges, found that there were twenty-nine different course titles used to describe a "basic reading" course and twenty-four used to describe a "developmental" course. Jackson (1978) found that, course titles notwithstanding, there was a great deal of commonality in college reading instruction. Based upon the analysis

of the responses of 105 predominantly four-year colleges, Jackson found that the following elements were emphasized in at least three-fourths of the programs: contextual analysis, finding main ideas, making inferences, drawing conclusions, test taking and notetaking.

Despite the variability in titles for similar courses and despite the similar emphases across courses, substantive differences in college reading instruction are evident. Some programs give credit and some do not. Some are required courses and some are not. Some are add-ons to the regular college curriculum; some involve restructuring of the curriculum. Some are integrated with content area courses while others operate independently. Most combine reading and study skills but some do not. Some provide counseling and tutorial services, while others offer reading instruction only. Some rely heavily on the use of standardized tests while others emphasize informal assessment.

Despite this variability, college reading instruction tends to fall into one of two general categories:

1. The self-contained course or sequence of courses in reading and study skills.
2. Courses or programs in which instruction in reading and study skills is interwoven with supplementary instruction in a content area.

Within each category a variety of approaches have been described in the literature. Some examples follow.

## Self-Contained Reading/Study Skills Programs

A course at Floyd Junior College is described by Howell (1972) as a combination of reading, listening and study skills. Reading skills emphasized include: reading a paragraph for main

sentence and supporting details, reading a chapter by previewing, organizing main points and supporting facts and recalling the most important ideas, exercising judgment in differentiating fact from opinion; adjusting rate of reading to purpose, vocabulary improvement, and use of reference materials. In addition, students are given practice in notetaking and in taking tests. For this practice, each faculty member at the college prepared a taped lecture and provided an excerpt from the textbook which paralleled the lecture and a sample test over the material. The course is one quarter in length and students take it voluntarily for three credits.

Frequently, reading/study skills courses are given in a sequence of two or more courses. This is true of the various colleges of the City University of New York (CUNY) as described by Soll and McCall (1981). For example, Lehman College of CUNY offers a three course sequence in the Department of Academic Skills. The first course, which carries no credit, focuses on the development of vocabulary and the basic reading comprehension skills. The second course, which carries two credits, emphasizes analytic and evaluative reading and study skills. The third course, also a two credit course, stresses the role of reading and study skills in the content areas. All courses provide instruction in test taking techniques. A student might be required to take one, two, or all three courses depending upon test scores.

Swalm and Cox (1980) describe the development of a reading course for special admission students at Rutgers University. The course was rather conventional in terms of the reading/study skills emphasized, e.g. comprehension skills, flexibility of reading rate, notetaking, preparing for and taking tests. The innovative strategy was to select materials of high interest value for minority students and to use these materials initially to practice the skills, then to move from these high interest materials to textbooks and materials found more conventionally in academic courses. The course could be completed in either one semester or two semesters depending upon the student.

Reading/study skills courses are found not only in public two-year and four-year colleges having open enrollment or special admission policies. Heinrichs (1981) describes a one semester course for academically capable but low achieving freshmen at Westminister College, a small, selective private college. Many of these students appeared to be fluent readers who nevertheless had negative attitudes and anxiety about reading and had difficulties in comprehension. The program provided counseling on a weekly basis. Instructional strategies included developing insights into the meaningful nature of print, involving students in recreational and content area reading, language activities combined with study techniques, notetaking, essay writing, test taking, time control, relaxation techniques, predicting/confirming as applied to college texts. Twenty-one of twenty-seven

students in the program for one semester returned to the college and had a great point average slightly higher than the overall freshman average.

## Programs Integrating Reading/Study Skills Instruction with Instruction in Content Areas

Moran (1980) describes an adjunct program at the University of California, Riverside in which reading/study skills instruction is coordinated with a particular content course. A reading specialist serves as an adjunct instructor in an entry level course, for example, sociology. The adjunct instructor attends the class sessions in the course, and, additionally, meets with the students as a group in separate sessions to assist them with reading and study skills. Moran describes the adjunct program in terms of what it is not, declaring that it is not tutoring in the content area, not individual study skills counseling, and that it is not remedial, i.e. it is not designed for students with serious deficiencies. The adjunct program is flexible and can be adjusted to meet the requests of students. However, there are certain "standard" topics, e.g. notetaking, reviewing for tests, taking tests. The adjunct program had been in operation at the Riverside campus for six years and was the only reading/study skills program offered.

Luckenbill (1972) described an experimental, interdisciplinary approach for high-risk freshmen at Miami-Dade Junior College in Florida. The staff of twenty, drawn from five disciplines (English, social science, natural science, psychology-counseling and reading) formed four interdisciplinary teams (I teams), each of which taught the same group of 110 to

125 students throughout the year. In this program the reading specialists did not attempt textbook rewriting, nor did they try to interpret students' textbook assignments for them, nor even to teach vocabulary. Rather, the reading specialists functioned as consultants to the other team members, pointing out students' limitations in reading and the relevance of reading for their own courses. They conducted mini-lessons in reading for faculty members and identified reading materials that fitted topically into the students' curriculum and that could also be used as effective exercises for attaining behavioral objectives in reading.

The foregoing descriptions are offered to suggest the variety of reading/study skills programs to be found in American colleges. As is noted by Grant and Hoeber (1978), the search for a model program which is generic in its effectiveness seems futile. Programs need to be situationally tailored. However, one does find in the literature certain recurring themes with respect to successful reading programs. These include:

1. Clearly articulated program purposes.
2. Administrative support and broad faculty participation.
3. Support services including counseling, tutoring and a variety of relevant materials and media.
4. Individualization of instruction based on diagnostic testing.
5. Attention to enhancing students' self-concepts.
6. Emphasis on success experience and mastery learning.
7. Multiple indices of evaluation.

These features would appear to be conducive to successful programs but the actual extent to which they contribute to program success is uncertain due to the paucity of systematic evaluative data.

## Current Trends in College Reading Instruction

In an attempt to explore the current status and trends in college reading instruction a questionnaire was sent to fifty institutions whose reading programs had been described in the literature over the past ten years. Usable responses were received from thirty of the institutions. The returned questionnaires reveal some interesting aspects of college reading programs.

1. Open admissions is still the prevailing condition. Only nine of the institutions claimed a selective admissions policy.

2. Reading courses continue to be housed in a variety of dwelling places, but the most common situation is for the program to constitute a specific department or division (9 programs), followed by locations in the English Department (7), the Education Department (5), Arts and Sciences/Humanities (4), a learning center (4) and counseling (1).

3. Programs are more likely not to be interdisciplinary in nature (19), but eleven respondents indicated the contrary, reporting that there was collaboration between reading specialists and subject matter specialists.

4. The institutions responding varied greatly in size so it is not surprising that the numbers of students participating in the programs also showed wide variation, from a low of twenty participants a year to a high of ten thousand.

5. Students enrolled in college reading programs are overwhelmingly likely to be freshmen. Twenty-six of the responding institutions indicated that freshmen students were in the majority and in no case was the freshmen component below forty percent.

6. Information as to the proportion of reading students entering or re-entering college after a prolonged interruption of schooling was less readily available. Eight of the schools were unable to furnish this statistic. Among those answering the variation was great, ranging from a low of less than one percent to a high of seventy-five to eighty-eight percent.

7. With regard to trends in numbers of students served by college reading programs, enrollments appear to be increasing (17 institutions) or stable (10 institutions). Only three reported declining enrollments. One program whose enrollments were on the rise, reported that the program, would not be continued next year for lack of funding.

8. The schools appear to cluster in two groups on the question of participation in the program on a voluntary or required basis. Nine of the schools reported a totally volunteer policy, while 12 reported the program's being mandated for all or nearly all participants.

9. Where participation is required for all or some students these are identified primarily on the basis of low test scores either prior to or at the time of admission to college (18 schools). Low grade point average was much less frequently used, (3 schools) probably because of the preponderance of freshmen participating. One institution reported that all pre-med and pre-nursing students were required to take the reading courses.

10. Courses in the program were more likely to be offered for academic credit than not (20 institutions). In three institutions granting of credit was qualified (e.g. institutional credit only, only if the reading course was tied to a "traditional" course, only for the "advanced" reading course).

11. Policy on granting of academic credit has not changed for the majority of schools (24); in the six schools which have changed policy, no discernable pattern emerged.

12. With regard to course content, two topics are covered in all the reading programs sampled: vocabulary development and comprehension. A large majority of the courses also deal with developing flexibility of reading rate (28), test-taking skills (23), listening skills (22) and time management (20). Eighteen of the programs include a speed reading component. A minority of the programs also addressed spelling, grammar or written expression, although several respondents indicated that these skills were handled in other courses. Among the topics mentioned spontaneously ("other") by respondents

were: anxiety and tension relief, development of self-concept, insights into the language process, thinking/memory/concentration, and critical reading.

13. Students tend to be exited from college reading courses chiefly on the basis of instructor grade (18 programs), test performance (12) or a combination of the two. In two programs the students decide when to exit from the program.

14. Evaluation of college reading programs is likely to be in terms of four criteria: improved test scores of clientele (21 programs), retention of students in the institution (16), students' self-reports (13), students' grade point averages (11). Graduation from the institution was used by used by five of the schools. Other criteria were unique to the responding programs. One reported "no meaningful evaluation of our program."

15. Answers to a question relating to changes in remedial/developmental courses/services for students indicate that significnt changes have been perceived at sixteen institutions. These include additional courses, expansion of course content, interdisciplinary cooperation, trends toward greater individualization (and vice versa).

16. Program changes anticipated over the next few years include expansion (10 schools), improving techniques of instruction and evaluation, reorganization/integration, elimination of some services due to anticipated funding cuts, and innovative scheduling.

As has been indicated in this paper, college reading/studies skills programs grew exponentially beginning in the 1960's. A national survey indicated that this growth was continuing as late as 1980.

What the future trend will be is a matter of conjecture. A federal commission studying ways to improve American education recently received testimony from representatives of colleges and universities in support of tougher college entrance requirements and of shifting remedial efforts back to high schools. (The Chronicles of Higher Education, June 30, 1982) The commission's

recommendations, expected to be released next March may provide significant portents for the future of college reading instruction in the United States.

## Bibliography


Coll, Patricia E. What's Happening in College Reading Improvement Programs: Report of a survey conducted in West Virginia. Reading World, 17, No.2 (December, 1977), p. 155-161.

Crawford, June J. The Need for Basic Skills in Colleges and Universities. Paper presented to the International Reading Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April,1979, ED 181 845.

Grant, Mary Kathyrn and Hoeber, Daniel R. Basic Skills Programs: Are They Working. AAHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 1. American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C., 1978.

Heinrichs, Margaret. Strategies for language expansion: a college reading program. Paper presented at the 26th Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association. New Orleans, Louisiana, April 27 - May 1, 1981.

Howell, Susan A. A reading and study skills course at Floyd Junior College. Twenty-first Yearbook of the National Reading Conference, Vol. 2, 1972, p. 22-28.

Ideas and trends: simplifying language for college students. New York Times, November 10, 1974, p.

Jackson, James E. College reading programs of today: who? what? where? 1978, ED 208 349.

Jacobson, Robert L. "Educators debate wisdom of raising college entrance standards. The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 30, 1982, p. 11.

Joplin, Alan L. Is There Any Difference? Paper presented at the 5th Annual Conference of the National Association for Remedial/Developmental Studies in Post Secondary Education. Dayton, Ohio, March 19-21, 1981.

Lukenbill, Maureen D. The Role of the Reading Teacher in an Interdisciplinary Program in the Junior College. Twenty-first Yearbook of the National Reading Conference, Vol. 2, 1972, p. 29-32.

Magarrell, Jack. College offered 15 pct. more courses this year, survey finds; remedial classes increase 22 pct. The Chronicle of Higher Education, June 1, 1981, pp. 1, 7-8.

... application was adjunct to course. Allegedly was set for students who felt they need ~~con~~ adjunct instruction come for it


Manzo, Anthony V. College Reading: Clone, Illegitimate Child on Hybrid. Address at Rutgers University, 1979. ED 178-881

Mason, George F. et al. Reading improvement programs in senior colleges and universities. Reading World, 17, No.3 (March 1978) 184-189.

Moran, Patrick J. Piggybacking Reading and Study Skills Onto College Courses. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association, St. Louis, Mo., May, 1980. ED 186 879

Paar, Frank W. A remedial program for the inefficient reader in college. Unpublished doctoral thesis. State University of Iowa, 1929.

Rauche, John E. and Snow, Jerry J. Over-coming Learning Pro-biems. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977.

Schantz, Maria E. A survey of reading improvement programs at selected two- and four-year state colleges and universities. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1976.

Soll, Lila and McCall, Cecelia. Basic Skills Programs at the City University of New York. Office of Academic Affairs, City University of New York, 1981. ED 207 029.

Swaim, James and Cox, Gordon. A content approach to reading skill development for special admit freshmen in a four year college. Twenty-first Yearbook of the National Reading Conference, Vol. 2, 1972, 42-49.

Traxler, Arthur F. The freshman curriculum and methods of teaching. In From High School to College, NFA Research Bulletin, II, 1938, 89-94.

Triggs, Frances B. Remedial reading programs: evidence of their development. Journal of Educational Psychology, 33 (December, 1942), 678-685.

Wassman, Rose. California College Reading Programs The State of the State. Study Prepared at De Anza College, 1977. ED 146 559

Waters, Margaret M. Reading. In Trillin, Agnes S. et al. Teaching Basic Skills in College. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980, p. 91-144.